

## **Learner Autonomy in Educational Institutions and the Challenges of (Human) Development in Nigeria and Africa**

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### **Abstract**

Education makes the human being a fully realized project. It is a catalyst for the realization of the potentialities of humans. This can only be successfully done if it is acknowledged that the individual is full of immense potential. It's the logic of learner-autonomy and all that it portends. In many an African setting this logic remains far-fetched. Teaching and learning in most African settings do not give room for the full application and realization of learner autonomy. It has grossly affected the realisation of the full potentials of individuals who are to be agents of development. This paper seeks to expose and address the process of teaching and learning in the African (Nigerian) setting in a way that shows how it defies the logic of learner-autonomy which subsequently affects human and social development. It concludes that education should permit learners to exploit their curiosities and creative acumen as major routes to development.

**Keywords:** Learner-autonomy, Education, Development, Nigeria, Africa

### **Introduction**

One of the primary aims of education is individual development which has as a necessary corollary the liberation of the human mind. The human mind is naturally unfathomable and has unlimited potentialities within it. Education creates the rooms and opens up the channels for the full realization of these possible potentialities. Education and all its processes act as a guide, a catalyst for these manifestations. It is widely believed that the human mind and indeed the human being is an open project capable of many transformations. To put the project on the right foundation and on a solid one for that matter, adequate care has to be taken to ensure that the purpose of education is not defeated in the process.

This paper submits that on most occasions individuals know their capabilities and limitations. They need the necessary enlightenment and guides to realise and utilize their capabilities. In such situations they have the capability and right to influence their guides on the route to lead them. In essence, those who are led can contribute to their guidance. This is the message of learner autonomy.

If a learner is not made to understand that he/she is in control of his/her 'destiny' many opportunities may be lost, such as self-confidence, creativity, esteem, etc. which could be contributory to the development of the human person and society in general. For development to be really proactive, the person must be part of its origin and process. In line with this, Ake (1996), though he sees the problem of development in Africa as a political one, stresses that development is a process by which people create and recreate themselves and their life circumstances to realise higher levels of civilisation in accordance with their own choices and values. He further observed that development is something that people must do for themselves, that if people are the end of development, then they have to be necessarily its agent and its means. Being the agent and the means of development entails that people must charter their own course. To be equipped for this they have to be capable to give birth to development ideas that suit their environment. This has to begin from the root and process of their education – education that would access and explore their potential.

### **The Concept/Hermeneutics of Learner Autonomy**

This paper strongly believes that Socrates is the initiator and strong advocate of learner autonomy. The 'Socratic Method' is a typical method of education where the principle of learner autonomy is wholly made manifest. There is need to point it out emphatically at this very beginning that Socrates' method of learner-autonomy was courage-instilling. It gives the learner (in Socrates' case - the interlocutors) the opportunity to exercise inner and academic freedom. It is equally strategic to observe that Socrates himself greatly had inner freedom. This is a crucial point in the hermeneutics of learner-autonomy. It is a widely believed maxim that no one gives that which one hasn't.

According to Holec (1979) and Little (1991; 2004), learners take their first steps towards autonomy when they recognise that they are responsible for their own learning and its success. This responsibility can be aroused in them by their teachers, as is the case with Socrates, as pointed out above. Thus the necessary atmosphere for learner autonomy is greatly influenced by the teacher.

To understand the inherent and also manifest magnitude of learner-autonomy in Socrates, there has to be a deep appreciation of his 'midwifery' method of education. In the first place, there are only two people or parties involved: the 'pregnant mother' and the 'midwife'. The pregnant mother is anyone 'pregnant' with ideas or knowledge or truth or even yet to be figured out potentials. The person (the pregnant one) is to play the major and primary role in the entire exercise. The midwife is there as an observer and guide. The pains of labour (thinking out ideas, truth, knowledge, etc.) are all the responsibilities of the pregnant mother. To stress or relax the muscles, breath, etc. remain the onus of the pregnant mother. The midwife never gives birth on behalf of the pregnant mother.

In one of Plato's Dialogues, *Theaetetus* (148-152), Socrates made us understand that the process of education, which is like the process of giving birth, is centred on the potential of the student, the pregnant mother, to follow the process of birth and growth of knowledge or truth (see Cooper and Hutchinson, 1997). In the case of Socrates' confrontation with his interlocutors, whenever he faults their ideas, reasoning and premise, the interlocutors are thrown into *aporia* – a state of not knowing what else to say – and they begin to think of a way out. This Socrates identified as the pains of labour which only those who are really interested in giving birth to truth or true knowledge can experience and undergo. This effort to think out or think up a way out of the *aporia* is a sign, according to Socrates, of being mentally fertile.

The stage of the *aporia* is a strategic stage in the analysis of the Socratic concept of learner autonomy. The *aporia* is believed to have been caused by the midwife not with any negative intent but to ensure that the pregnant mother (here the student) gives birth herself successfully and not the midwife giving birth on behalf of the mother. The *aporia* is the challenge of the pangs of birth/labour. The 'pangs of birth/labour' is the effort to think out the answers or solutions to the questions posed by Socrates or the teacher. This is why Socrates in the *Theaetetus* of Plato (see Cooper and Hutchinson, 1997) challenged the learners, the students to give birth to their own truth which they are pregnant with by exercising their freedom of thought and questioning, examining and judging for themselves. In such birth-giving situations, the midwife, only watches. Thus the teacher/midwife is only a guide in the process of education.

When the midwife/teacher begins to give birth herself, what would be obtainable is transmitted knowledge, ideas and truth. There would be no pangs of labour. In essence, transmission of knowledge would be averse to learner-autonomy. Transmitted knowledge that does not involve the 'pangs of labour' can undermine potentialities in learners.

Transmitted knowledge is averse to human and personal development. It kills potential. It leads to stillbirths. It stunts potentialities in learners. For instance, in the *Meno*, one of Plato's Dialogues (see Cooper and Hutchinson 1997), when Socrates was dealing with the slave boy Meno, Meno couldn't believe he could solve a geometric puzzle on his own following Socrates' method of eliciting the right answers through proper questioning. This is one of the routes to self-discovery of potentialities. If this is not the case then it is no longer an autonomous effort or process. From this position, transmitted knowledge without the 'pangs of labour' smacks of indoctrination. Socrates did not become popular by forcing his ideas on others; he was not even interested in asserting authority over his ignorant interlocutors but allowing them take charge of the situation. Just as Benson (1997) pointed out, one of the perspectives of learner autonomy is the bestowing of the responsibility for learning on the individual. Why should teachers and other educators (especially in the Nigerian and African setting) lay much stress on personal authority in their various little constituencies? According to McCombs (2012), 'Many teachers fear that giving students more freedom of choice will lead to their losing control over classroom management.' She recalled that research tells us that in fact the opposite always happens. That when students understand their roles as agents (the one in charge) over their feelings, thinking, and learning behaviours, they are more likely to take responsibility for their learning. She concluded that to be autonomous learners, students need to have some choice and a great degree of control over the learning process. Thus it is very cogent that teachers need to learn how to help students develop the ability to make appropriate choices and take control over their own learning.'

The word 'autonomy' comes from a combination of two Greek root words – 'autos', meaning *self* and 'nomos' meaning *rule, norms*. Etymologically, 'autonomous' means norms created – by oneself for oneself. The norms of a society or an individual are seen as the society's truths and knowledge of issues. These truths or norms for them to be autonomous rightly, they must emanate independently from the self, the within of the individual. Knowledge which is imposed on learners from the external (teacher/midwife) defies the term 'autonomous learning'. It leads to indoctrination from many perspectives.

### **The Nigerian/African Education Setting and the Application of Learner-Autonomy**

The educational systems in Nigeria and many an African countries were inherited from the west as a result of the scourge of colonialism. This system of education in most cases was seen as biased in that it served solely the purpose of enhancing the achievement of colonial interests and administration. This to a great extent decided the nature of the curriculum in the many African countries where both the colonialist and their counterpart missionaries were pursuing their various interests. The interest here is, however, to show the type of education inherited from the foreign incursions into Africa.

The Africans, due to their predicaments, were not offered the opportunity to influence the curriculum in the first place. This was because their level of traditional education was redirected. Because of communication gaps, and instructions in English and French, languages became priorities in many of the then colonies. The education in the languages of the master took after the Skinner-styled 'respondents' of elicited responses (see Skinner, 1953). All the other subjects, mostly arts subjects, followed these styles, eliciting and transmitting knowledge to the Africans. The colonialists 'know' and possess the knowledge, whereas the Africans were seen as 'not knowing' and to be empty vessels waiting to be filled up with the 'required' knowledge. Education was seen as a process of transmitting knowledge from the master/teacher who is believed to have knowledge, to the student/learner who does not. The student is a barren woman. The service of a midwife is ruled out.

This was the tradition of education handed over to the Africans by the missionaries and colonialists. However there is no gainsaying the fact that Africans did not benefit in a little way from colonial education. It strongly remains contentious in many scholarly circles whether colonial education, bearing in mind its style, was development inclined. It was obvious that the western-styled and inherited education curriculum did not grant great learner-autonomy and was more superficial to the African educational needs, yet several efforts made through policy regulations have not yielded any positive result. Many nations of Africa have designed series of national policies on education which they feel are adequate for their national goals, yet education refuses to bring about the much required development results. This is the crux of the matter. Where does the problem lie?

It is the conviction of this essay that irrespective of the fact that the solutions to developmental success of African countries may be multi-faceted, the greater solution lies with the education sector, in the process of teaching and learning. This is a big challenge. If Africans and indeed Nigeria debunked the colonial education we inherited in the quest to pursue our own educational policies which we believe would see to both individual and national development, and the issue of learner autonomy still remains a mirage, then we still have a lot to do.

Every human is believed to be pregnant with ideas and potentialities. It is also believed by a great many that ideas rule the world. The most potent ideas are creative and innovative ideas. These emanate from within. The process of education is expected to bring out ideas from the individual learners and not put ideas into them; ideas already created and moulded. Such a system can only lead to redundancy of knowledge. A typical example is when a student is asked to summarise a chapter or a section of the teacher's textbook. The student could be asked to critique the same chapter rather than simply summarising it. This is the typical scenario in most higher institutions of learning in the African setting. There is a perceived great divide between the learned and the illiterate in many African societies. It reflects in all social and economic rankings across the society. This inevitably infested the educational settings that the teacher over-elevates himself or herself above the students. At the same time an odious impression is created and forced into the minds of the students that their success depends on them (the teachers). Thus a teacher can personally decide the fate of a student since the assignment is based on the procuring of the teacher's or lecturer's textbooks. This is the reason why assignments are attached to particular textbooks of lecturers. This is the spoor of decay in the failure of educational institutions in achieving the various philosophies and national goals of the various African countries in areas of both individual and national development in particular. Only the circumspect can clearly and objectively appreciate the thesis that such situations stifle the logic of learner-autonomy and that learner-autonomy remains the only way out of such predicaments. Where there is learner-autonomy there is a greater degree of freedom of birth of ideas, truth and knowledge which are crucial to both individual and social development.

It now becomes pertinent to ask, how are African educational institutions averse to learner-autonomy? What factors show that they do not subscribe in practice to the fundamentals of learner autonomy? To these we now turn, but it has to be noted that the following positions are gleaned from the public educational institutions, especially the higher educational institutions.

#### **Course Outline or Content**

There is clear and intentional hoarding of course outline or contents from the students. Students are sheepishly carried along in their various courses without any idea of where they are heading. As the teacher/lecturer needs to prepare for the lectures in advance, so should

the student, so that in the lecture room there would be real interaction and cross pollination of ideas. Unfortunately, the student is incapacitated. The student should be pregnant with ideas following prior preparation of the day's course topic. The students also fail to know whether the course outlines were covered, i.e. all treated or were some unintentionally skipped.

When a student reads or prepares a topic beforehand, if it is not clearly understood, the lecture day prepares the adequate forum to discuss and further clarify issues for the student's greater understanding. But where this is not the case, a big problem arises. If the student had no idea of the topic for the day, it may be the first time of hearing about such issue being discussed, how can he/she grasp the entire details in one period of lecture. Calling the lecture back becomes another issue.

If one of the essential features of autonomy and indeed learner autonomy is the ability to determine a course of action in advance, their preventing the students from having access to the course outlines of their courses becomes antithetical to the principles of learner autonomy. It gives the students no room for deliberation and as such freedom is definitely denied in the process. This is also part of academic freedom. Some students being offered some courses do not see the course outlines to compare them with the textbooks that are being sold to them by their lecturers. This is because in most cases the textbooks and their contents are not entirely relevant or exhaustive of the scheme they are to cover.

### **Course Materials**

There is no gainsaying the fact that there is paucity of relevant materials for many of the courses offered in many African academic institutions. The few that are available are very old editions that do not portray the reasoning of the present age. However, this is crucial. But the accreditation process done by relevant regulating bodies should take cognizance of the availability of relevant materials (literature) as one of the criteria for approval of academic courses. It is believed that at the beginning of any course, the course outline/content is given along with relevant bibliography for the student to consult and research for a greater appreciation of the course. However, there is the apprehension on the part of lecturers and teachers that the majority of the relevant materials (especially quality foreign professional texts) are very inaccessible to students and in some cases so exorbitant that some students would spend fortunes in buying just one out of the many so listed. Some texts in medicine and engineering are around \$150 (for one textbook).

Due to the above scenario, an unwholesome situation emerges. In the Nigerian academic setting, there was a culture of production and sales of handouts (uncensored monographs) which were made compulsory for every student to buy. Because of the poor quality of the material contents, the regulatory bodies sanctioned such practices and encouraged the bold ones to translate or transform these into publications (books). Because of the financial spirit already imbibed through the earlier sales of handouts, the same old methods were incorporated in the current situations of use of books. The crucial point here is that it was rare to see a lecturer or professor recommending a colleague's book to the students in the department willingly. Their own books became the *punctum puncti*, the point of all points, the sole encyclopaedia for that course. There is a popular Greek saying that 'I fear a man of one book' – see *Chambers 20th Century Dictionary* (1983). How would the student come to be aware of the existence of differing opinions and ideas? What if the points weren't driven home well in the master's 'masterpiece'? This is an example of indoctrination of a learner who is now full of doubts about his or her own capabilities. He or she becomes unsure of his or her fertility of ideas. The midwife is now the one delivering the baby herself instead of helping the pregnant person be delivered of the pregnancy.

### Continuous Assessment

Continuous assessment is part of the requirements for the successful completion of a course. It can be used to assess the practical understanding of the student about the course. In essence the continuous assessments have a practical rather than a theoretical undertone. They could take the nature of case studies, simulation, or relating a theory or principle to a particular life experience *vis-à-vis* a specific environmental setting. These are to ensure that the students experience the pangs of labour/birth in the process of giving birth to ideas.

Unfortunately, such a situation is far-fetched in most cases. The assignments are given in a way that the students easily go to the internet and download the materials and forward to the teacher. The funny aspect of it all is that these students who do not want to experience the pangs of birth fail to go through these downloaded materials and edit them to tune with the nature of the assignment before submission, later come to discover that they have failed the assessment because their papers were cancelled. Why? Because they are the same as a great many others of their ilk, downloaded downloading from the same source/website and submitted submitting it unedited. In such situations efforts were made, at least to read the students assignments, otherwise such academic dishonesty wouldn't have been discovered. What of the great many that do not read such at all?

If students are not given such practical assignments, how would their abilities would be tested? How would they assess their ability for independent thought and research? These are some of the essentials of learner autonomy. Unfortunately, these are the ways it is killed in some educational institutions. This is the spoor of decay of what the employers of labour see in the labour market, that it is as full of half-baked graduates. This leads to the loss of self-confidence.

### Marking Scheme

The standpoint here, though a factual issue, is not widespread. Many institutions make it mandatory that teachers/lecturers must provide a marking scheme for the questions they set for every examination. This is to ensure conformity and uniformity. This is not bad on a *prima facie* basis. However, the problem is that in some cases the marking schemes are designed as definite statements of answers to the questions which must be followed rigidly. In most cases such non-axiomatic courses or subjects which are full of argumentative reasoning are now formatted to fit a particular ready-made mould. Just like in cases of assignments earlier discussed, the questions are framed in a manner which shows that the lecturers are apprehensive of confrontations by heads of departments and other external examiners for not providing exhaustive justifications for any question set. Therefore, they frame their question in a way that would limit voluminous answers from the students thereby avoiding 'undue' stress on reading volumes of examination scripts.

A student who has marvellous ideas and answers, and may be following extensive research and understanding, stands the risk of not making it if he/she takes the risk of providing 'novel' answers or solutions outside the ways they were presented in class and lecture rooms by the teachers/lecturers. Students are also very apprehensive that novel ideas do not sail in front of some lecturers who may have also inherited ideas.

Marking schemes should act as guides and where they are very inevitable due to institutional policies they should be open-ended and not definitive statements of answers. This would ensure that a defeatist purpose is not pursued in the process of checkmating irregularities. This is because in most cases when students' scripts are called up for scrutiny they are judged on verbatim or rigid conformance to the written down scheme. Marking schemes appear as definitive answers. This is why in most cases the schemes are called 'marking scheme'. When students are conditioned to answering questions just as exactly as they are obtained in the



lecturers' textbooks in a way that other adequate answers outside these do not count this is part of the problem being addressed by learner autonomy.

### Evaluations

In a research conducted by McCombs (2012) she noted that 'most teachers are frustrated by their unmotivated students. What they may not know is how important the connection is between student motivation and self-determination. Research has shown that motivation is related to whether or not students have opportunities to be autonomous and to make important academic choices and contributions of ideas. Having choices and freedom allows children to feel that they have control or ownership over their own learning. This, in turn she believes, helps them develop a sense of responsibility and self-motivation which can lead to the birth of development of potential ideas. She further observed that when students feel a sense of ownership, they want to engage in academic tasks, challenging ideas and persist in learning. This position points to the fact that the teachers and the educational environment in which they operate are influential factors in the issue of learner autonomy. Thus they can mar the full realisation of the goals of learner autonomy.

It has been the *leitmotif* of this essay that lack of appreciation of the entails of learner autonomy is one of the great banes of development in Africa. This is based on the basic fact that learner autonomy gives greater room for individual development in the areas of creativity and the use of initiatives. Creativity is the spur of development and manifestation or actualization of potentialities. Development of initiatives and creativity are the watchwords of education. Knowledge and truth appear politicized through over-officiousness (see Ake, 1996). Autocracy remains elevated and unabated. This often leads to a blind alley, a vicious circle. In such situations as x-rayed above in this essay development can never be indigenous. Development in Africa is likely to remain a mirage for a longer period than necessary. It may not be achieved through the constant rolling out of new highfalutin educational policies whereas the existing one has not been critically evaluated and re-evaluated.

From the expositions so far made, the following are discernible barriers to African development.

### Educational Parrotism

The parrot is known for its too much talk and repetition without commensurate practical backing. It cannot transcend itself. It only repeats what it believed it heard. With the obtainable situations as exposed, why would it be a surprise that students are mere depositories, warehouses where teachers dump their ideas and information during the course of teaching and learning? And during exams, these ideas are retrieved or supplied back verbatim to the depositors without the minimum interests of elaborations. In Ion one of the Dialogues of Plato (see Cooper and Hutchinson, 1997), Ion felt that he had learnt a lot and is more developed by being a professional reciter of Homeric verses. It would be agreed that if Ion had been put to test by Socrates to start any of the lines of the verses midway and complete it that he would definitely be unable to accomplish that.

This educational parrotism brings to my mind a scene in one of the National programmes (opera) of Nigeria Television Authority (NTA) known as the 'National Masquerade'. The lead actor Chief Zebrudaya sent his illiterate house boy on an errand to deliver three different letters with highly confidential matters to three friends involved in a contentious issue. Cognizance of the houseboy's illiterate status he fixed two of the letters one after the other in the boy's armpits as he called the names of the addressees and told him to hold the third one in his right hand and off he went. Along the way he continued to recite the names of the addressees and the locations/positions (where he held) of their letters. Unfortunately for him, one of his bosom friends, a semi-literate one sighted him and his predicament and decided to

see the names of the addressees. He obliged and his friend gathered the three letters together. After looking at the addresses he just dumped the letters and went his way. The house boy was then thrown into a serious confusion; he did not know what else to do in order not to mix up the letters and deliver them to wrong destinations. Unfortunately he couldn't sort them properly and the letters ended in wrong hands divulging unintended information.

This is educational parrotism in manifestation. Recitation, which is implied at the educational institutional level we are discussing, is not knowledge and development inclined as Socrates made us to understand in the case of Ion. Transmission of ideas that lack the 'pangs of labour' from teacher to student which leads to mere recitation or exact reproduction of what the lecturers have given in class during exams never allows the real mental development of the learner at this level.

### **Initiative/Creativity Blackout**

Initiatives and creativity are essential signs of what human potentials look like. Humans are believed to be bundles of potent ideas which can be channelled to use in different fields of human endeavours. Through the process of trial and error such ideas can come to positive fruitions. Many education theorists strongly believe that the building up of initiatives and creativity are the watchwords of education and its institutions. John Dewey is a champion in this noble and development-oriented cause (see Dewey, 2009). Dewey made prominent what is called experimental education. This allows students to discover their creativities and potentials.

The gravamen here is how are these addressed and worked out in the African educational setting. With what is very obtainable on ground these cannot be realized if things continue the way they are. Initiatives and creativity can only thrive towards development if perspective is acknowledged. Perceptivity is a sign that thinking is in process. Here is not the best place to roll out the list of successes and achievements recorded based on the use of initiatives and creativity. Initiative and creativity are both attitude and habit development. The environment should be very conducive for such to thrive. Authoritarianism abhors such situations. Africans are very autocratic traditionally. This has been incorporated across the border of the various sectors of the society in this more democratic setting of the present age.

To buttress the point here, it is cogent to recall an experiment Rogers (1979) recorded or referred to which was conducted to drive home the role of learner autonomy as an elixir toward the success in educational development of the learner. This experiment involved one Miss Shiel who decided to give her class adequate freedom (learner-autonomy) to initiate their learning and stayed only to guide or assist them only when they were in difficulties. This was not the case with other classes in the same school who rigidly followed the traditional protocols. At the end her class produced impressive results that caught the attention of the school management that later adopted her method of teaching and learning. It is good to note that Rogers pointed out that learning (education) is self-initiated and that even if the stimulus comes from the external, the sense of discovery, of reaching out, of grasping and comprehending comes from within the learner. The impact this has on the learner is marvellous just as the impressive performance of Miss Shiel's students. There was growing pride in self-improvement. The learner should be part of the experiment on learning and not relegated to an observer of in the entire scenario.

When we talk of the education environment being conducive for learner autonomy to thrive and yield the required results, a reference to the experiment of Miss Shiel as reported by Rogers (1979) drives home the entire message of Rogers. If Miss Shiel's School had been run as an autocratic one, the marvellous success would not have been achieved. The success was so tremendous that others tried to copy it and such an effort was encouraged by authorities and



the methods were equally appropriated. Shiel used her own initiative and creative acumen against the traditional teaching and learning standards already in existence. She also allowed and recognized the same in her students and success was given birth to. She is of course a true Socratic midwife. One striking point also here is that Shiel gave out what she really had. No one gives that which one doesn't have.

Initiatives and creativity flow from ideas. Ideas build on one another. Once an idea is allowed to be given birth to, either it dies on its own, or it matures and is developed by others until it concretizes. This is the process of human progress. Many of the developments recorded in human history have been outcomes of independent and private initiatives. Many received government and corporate encouragements and these are what humanity is enjoying today. If Africans are not broadminded in encouraging independent thought through the educational institutions, then all development quests would remain far-fetched. Development involves a functional approach. It is a multi-sectoral energy.

### **Conclusion**

Education plays a very strategic role in the development and progress of any society. That society was able to experience and move from one level of civilization to a better one is thanks to the functionality of their education at the individual and social levels of development. Individual development is a necessary corollary to social development. If internal freedom is not achieved by the individual then individual development, social freedom and development would all remain unattainable.

If healthy competitions are introduced in the sector sanity could be restored. This has somehow started in the Nigerian setting exorbitant fees charged by private schools. Parents want their children to receive the best of education. Parents want children to receive the achieved based on real effort. To lend credence to this if a statistic is provided on the number of children of both past and incumbent political office holders in African who study in their home country public institutions one would be shocked to see that it would not be up to 20%. However, this competition is only to make government public academic institutions sit up. If development could come from any of these, it would not matter, it would still be for the good of the entire society.

A better competition which would bring about the much required orientation would be for the names of participants for any graduate recruitment exams to be displayed laying emphasis on their institutions of graduation. This would be a healthy challenge for African institutions. A local maxim in Nigeria has it that 'unless a boil at the buttocks/bottom is exposed, it would not go (easily)'. When this is done, the institutions that would become noted for producing graduates that do not make it in such exercises will then have to go back to their drawing boards.

Learner autonomy demands the spirit and environment of freedom. Authoritarianism remains anathema to the principles and spirit of learner autonomy. Rogers (1969) whom reference had been made to earlier must have been influenced to define learning the way he did following Marshal MacLuhan's observation that if a five year old child is moved to a new location with a different language and is allowed to play freely with his new companions without any language instruction at all, the child will learn the language within one month and with good accent. He then observed that if the language was to be taught the child in a formal way, especially in the scenario presented in this paper, which always is the teacher's way, the reverse would be the case and the child may never learn nor speak the language correctly (See McLuhan and Leonard 1967). This is the medium of the message of the paper. Autonomy in learning is the best way towards achieving success in teaching and learning and achieving the necessary development that comes with it.

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